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## Comparing parental acceptance: the rejection levels and peer relationships of Turkish preschool children

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### Abstract

The aim of this research was to compare the parental acceptance-rejection levels and peer relationships of 5-6 year old preschool children. The sample used in this research consisted of 150 children and their parents who were living in Denizli, Turkey. The results indicated that the mother's acceptance-rejection level had a significant predictive effect on the victimisation, aggression, pro-social behaviour, exclusion and hyperactivity of 5-6 year old children. The father's acceptance-rejection level did not have a significant predictive effect with regard to the pro-social behaviours, aggression, asocial behaviours, exclusion, fear-anxiety, hyperactivity-distractibility and victimisation of 5-6 year old children. In addition, when both the mother and father's acceptance-rejection levels were taken into account together, they had a significant predictive effect with regard to aggression, exclusion, hyperactivity-distractibility and victimisation.

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*Keywords:* parental acceptance-rejection, peer relationships, preschool children

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### 1. Introduction

Peer relationships during the early years of life have attracted attention, in terms of both their short and long-term effects. While they shape children's ability to adapt to school, their social skills and their social standing in the short term, they have been found to be associated with academic achievement, social competences and even depression as well as adaptation at school in subsequent years in the long term (Gülay, 2010). One of the most important variables affecting peer relationships among young children is their family. A family has a complex structure containing a range of variables such as child-rearing attitudes, discipline, socio-economic level, communication between parents and children, the number of siblings and cultural expectations. Each variable in this structure has different effects on the child. Parental acceptance-rejection is one of the variables included in the family structure. According to the parental acceptance-rejection theory put forward by Ronald R. Rohner (Rohner, Rohner, & Roll, 1984), parental acceptance-rejection has a significant effect on the personality, development and even mental health of the child (Önder & Gülay, 2007). There is a bidirectional point of view in the theory. While the first aspect is the parents' acceptance or rejection behaviours towards their children, the second is how the child perceives these behaviours (being accepted or rejected) (Vulic'-Prtoric' & Macuka, 2006). While accepting parents are defined as warm-hearted, affectionate and concerned about their children, parents who reject their children are defined as having non-

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permissive, assaultive and even hostile attitudes towards their children. As a result, accepted children are aware of the fact that they are loved. They have high levels of self-confidence and establish healthy social relations (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Rohner, 1986). On the other hand, rejected children encounter both internalised and externalised problems more frequently (Rohner & Britner, 2002; Vulic'-Prtoric', 2000). Therefore, the aim of this study was to compare the parental acceptance-rejection level and peer relationships of 5-6 year old preschool children.

## 2. Materials and method

The descriptive survey method was used in this research.

### 2. 1. Participants

The aim of this research was to compare the parental acceptance-rejection level and peer relationships of 5-6 year old preschool children. The sample used in this research consisted of 150 children and their parents who were living in Denizli, Turkey.

### 2. 1. 1. Measures

In this research, demographic data, the parental acceptance-rejection scale, the child behaviour scale and the peer victimisation scale were used in order to gather data.

*2. 1. 1. 1. Parental acceptance-rejection scale:* This scale was developed by Rohner, Saavedna and Granum (1980) (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). The scale was translated into Turkish and standardised by Anjel and Erkman in 1993 (Öner, 1997). It uses a four-point Likert scale and consists of 60 items. The parents of three-year old children are able to fill out the questionnaire by themselves (Öner, 1997). The Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire PARQ consists of four subscales: Warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated/rejection (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). The total score obtained on the scale indicates the total level of rejection. A higher score means a higher level of rejection, but a lower level of acceptance. There is no cut-off point in the scale (Toran, 2005).

*2. 1. 1. 2. The child behaviour scale:* This scale was developed by Ladd and Profilet in 1996. All of the items in the scale are designed to measure the frequency of certain actions, through the respondents' selecting one of the following options: "never", "sometimes" or "always" The assessment of the reliability of the study that adapted the scale to Turkish (Gülay, 2008) found that the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was .81. The internal consistency coefficient of the subscale "aggression with peers" was .87, for the subscale "prosocial behaviour with peers" it was .88, for "asocial behaviour with peers" it was .84, for the subscale "fear-anxiety" the value was .78, for "exclusion by peers" it was .89, and the internal consistency coefficient of the subscale "hyperactivity-distractibility" was .83 (Gülay, 2008). The total scores received for the individual subscales are a measure of the frequency with which the behaviour described by the subscale is displayed (Ladd & Profilet, 1996).

*2. 1. 1. 3. Peer victimisation scale:* Based upon the "self-report peer victimisation scale" developed by Becky Kochenderfer and Gary W. Ladd in 1997, this scale was developed in 2002 for children of 5-6 years old. It is filled in by teachers (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002). A study on the linguistic equivalence, reliability and validity of the scale was conducted in 2008 by Hülya Gülay. This study found the internal consistency coefficient of the scale to be .72 (Gülay, 2008).

### 2. 2. 1. Procedure

The scale of parental acceptance and rejection was filled out by the mothers and fathers of preschool children attending preschools in Denizli. The fathers and mothers filled in the scale separately. The demographic data, child behaviour scale and victimisation scale were filled out by the children's teachers.

### 2.2.2. Data analysis

The data were analysed using the SPSS 13.0 statistical package. Multiple regression analysis was applied in order to determine the predictive effect of the mother and father's acceptance-rejection on peer relationships.

## 2. Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistic, means, standard deviations and correlations matrix

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Mother's acceptance-rejection level	81.95	12.69	--							
2. Father's acceptance-rejection level	84.99	13.78	.40**	--						
3. Prosocial behaviours	14.70	5.48	-.17*	-.03	--					
4. Aggression	2.68	3.34	.36**	.11	-.61**	--				
5. Asocial behaviours	2.88	3.07	.04	-.05	-.50**	.31**	--			
6. Exclusion	1.91	2.50	.20*	-.09	-.59**	.64**	.60**	--		
7. Fear-anxiety	3.42	3.18	.08	-.04	-.49**	.56**	.50**	.65**	--	
8. Hyperactivity-distractibility	2.78	2.27	.18*	-.09	-.63**	.66**	.29**	.52**	.43**	--
9. Victimization	.5533	1.27	.29**	.10	-.45**	.69**	.28**	.58**	.46**	.48**

Note: N = 150; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 2. Results of multiple regression analysis conducted in order to predict the mother's acceptance-rejection level

Variables	$\beta$	T
Prosocial behaviours	-.17	-2.155*
R = .17 R <sup>2</sup> = .03 $F(2, 149) = 4.643$ *		
Aggression	.36	4.714**
R = .36 R <sup>2</sup> = .13 $F(2, 149) = 22.219$ **		
Asocial behaviours	.04	.476
R = .40 R <sup>2</sup> = .00 $F(2, 149) = .227$		
Exclusion	.20	2.420*
R = .20 R <sup>2</sup> = .04 $F(2, 149) = 5.855$ *		
Fear-anxiety	.08	1.000
R = .08 R <sup>2</sup> = .00 $F(2, 149) = 1.000$		
Hyperactivity-distractibility	.18	2.271*
R = .18 R <sup>2</sup> = .03 $F(2, 149) = 5.159$ *		
Victimization	.29	3.747**
R = .29 R <sup>2</sup> = .09 $F(2, 149) = 14.040$ **		

Note: N = 150; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 1 demonstrates that there is a negatively significant relationship between the mother's acceptance-rejection level and her child's pro-social behaviours ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was also found that there is a positively significant relationship between the mother's acceptance-rejection level and the child's levels of aggression, exclusion, hyperactivity-distractibility and victimisation ( $p < .05$ ;  $p < .001$ ). No significant relationship was established between the mother's acceptance-rejection level and the child's asocial behaviour and fear-anxiety levels ( $p > .05$ ). Table 2 demonstrates that the mother's acceptance-rejection level has a predictive effect on her child's aggression, victimisation, pro-social behaviours, exclusion, and hyperactivity-distractibility levels ( $p < .05$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In addition, the mother's acceptance-rejection level was determined not to have a predictive effect on her child's asocial behaviours and fear-anxiety levels ( $p > .05$ ).

**Table 3. Results of multiple regression analysis conducted in order to predict the father's acceptance-rejection levels**

Variables	$\beta$	T
Prosocial behaviours R = .03 R <sup>2</sup> = .00 F(2,149) = .153	-.03	-.391
Aggression R = .11 R <sup>2</sup> = .01 F(2, 149) = 1.957	.11	1.399
Asocial behaviours R = .05 R <sup>2</sup> = .00 F(2, 149) = .365	.05	-.605
Exclusion R = .09 R <sup>2</sup> = .00 F(2, 149) = 1.419	.09	-1.191
Fear-anxiety R = .38 R <sup>2</sup> = .00 F(2, 149) = .208	.03	-.457
Hyperactivity-distractibility R = .09 R <sup>2</sup> = .00 F(2, 149) = 1.195	.09	-1.093
Victimisation R = .09 R <sup>2</sup> = .01 F(2, 149) = 1.463	.09	1.210

Note: N = 150; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .001

No significant relationship was found between the father's acceptance-rejection level and his child's pro-social behaviours, asocial behaviour, aggression, exclusion, fear-anxiety, hyperactivity-distractibility and victimisation levels (p > .05) in Table 1. As seen in Table 3, the father's acceptance-rejection level was found not to have a predictive effect on his child's pro-social behaviours, asocial behaviours, aggression, exclusion, fear-anxiety, hyperactivity-distractibility and victimisation levels (p > .05).

**Table 4. Results of multiple regression analysis regarding the effect of the mother and father's acceptance-rejection variables on predicting peer relationships**

Predictors	Peer relationships	
	$\beta$	T
Prosocial behaviours		
Mother's acceptance-rejection level	-.19	-2.171
Father's acceptance-rejection level	.04	.501
R = .18 R <sup>2</sup> = .03 F(2, 149) = 2.435		
Aggression		
Mother's acceptance-rejection level	.38	4.479
Father's acceptance-rejection level	-.04	-.420
R = .36 R <sup>2</sup> = .13 F(2, 149) = 11.136**		
Asocial behaviours		
Mother's acceptance-rejection level	.07	.781
Father's acceptance-rejection level	-.08	-.865
R = .08 R <sup>2</sup> = .00 F(2, 149) = .487		
Exclusion		
Mother's acceptance-rejection level	.28	3.213
Father's acceptance-rejection level	-.21	-2.406
R = .27 R <sup>2</sup> = .07 F(2, 149) = 5.915*		
Fear-anxiety		
Mother's acceptance-rejection level	.11	1.288
Father's acceptance-rejection level	-.08	-.933
R = .11 R <sup>2</sup> = .01 F(2, 149) = .935		
Hyperactivity-distractibility		
Mother's acceptance-rejection level	.26	2.996
Father's acceptance-rejection level	-.19	-2.222
R = .26 R <sup>2</sup> = .07 F(2, 149) = 5.117*		
Victimisation		
Mother's acceptance-rejection level	.30	3.527

Father's acceptance-rejection level	-.02	-.252
R = .30 R <sup>2</sup> = .09 F(2, 149) = .7.007**		

Note: N = 150; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .001

Table 4 demonstrates the double effects of the mother and father's acceptance-rejection levels on peer relationships. The mother and father's acceptance-rejection levels are significant predictors of their children's aggression, exclusion, hyperactivity-distractibility and victimisation levels. ( $p < .05$ ;  $p < .001$ ). On the other hand, the mother and father's acceptance-rejection levels are not significant predictors of prosocial behaviours, asocial behaviours or fear-anxiety levels ( $p > .05$ ).

### 3. Discussion

The results of this research revealed that their mothers' acceptance-rejection level had a significantly predictive effect on the victimisation, aggression, prosocial behaviours, exclusion and hyperactivity of 5-6 year old children. Their father's acceptance-rejection level did not have any significant predictive effect on the prosocial behaviours, aggression, asocial behaviours, exclusion, fear-anxiety, hyperactivity-distractibility and victimisation of 5-6 year old children. In addition, the mother's acceptance-rejection level was determined to have more of an effect on the children's peer relationships compared to the father's acceptance-rejection level. The fact that mothers take more task and responsibility than fathers for childcare and education in the Turkish culture and the fact that children spend more time with their mothers than their fathers may have led to this result. Thus, children are affected more by their mothers' behaviours and attitudes than by their fathers'.

In addition, when the mother and the father's acceptance-rejection levels were taken together, they had a significantly predictive effect on aggression, exclusion, hyperactivity-distractibility and victimisation. The problems and disagreements which children experience in their direct relationships with their parents reflect negatively onto their relationships with other people. Moreover, when parents' warm and caring attitudes towards their children diminish, the children's social development can also be negatively affected (Conger et al., 2002). It has been reported in several studies that negative behaviours on the part of the mother and father can cause empathic perspective-taking problems and social withdrawal in children (Mills & Rubin, 1998; Soenens et al., 2007). In accordance with acceptance-rejection syndrome as outlined in parental acceptance-rejection theory, children rejected by their mother or father can exhibit behaviours which are shaped by problematic situations (particularly the attachment figure) as well as aggressiveness, anger and addictions (Rohner & Khaleque, 2010). Studies dealing with the effects of parental acceptance-rejection on their children's development, especially those which have been conducted in the last 20 years in various cultures (Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1997; Marcus & Gray, 1998; Pedersen, 1994) have stated that many behavioural problems are observed among children who have been rejected by their mother or father.

Another result of this research is the fact that the mother and father's acceptance-rejection levels, alone or together, do not have any effect on children's asocial behaviours and fear-anxiety levels. This finding indicates that different variables (gender, social status, social competence, teacher-child relations etc.) had an effect on the asocial behaviours and fear-anxiety levels of the children in this sample group.

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